NEWS RELEASE

Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection

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Comments sought on proposed changes to the Reportable Food Registry affecting consumers, food manufacturers and retailers

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MADISON, Wisconsin – The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is soliciting comments about proposed rule changes to the Reportable Food Registry (RFR), a food safety reporting system, which would lead to major changes for consumers and food product manufacturers, processors and retailers, according to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

"Both the food industry and consumers have an opportunity to comment and shape the language of how these rules will be implemented to protect the public from foodborne illness," says Terri Wenger, DATCP's Chief of Program Evaluation and Emergency Preparedness.

The FDA is seeking input to help determine, among other things:

- what information should be required in consumer notifications so that consumers can accurately determine whether a food in their possession presents a food safety risk;
- the format in which the information should be presented;
- what types of retail establishments FDA should consider to be "grocery stores" subject to the consumer notification requirements;
- how grocery stores should be made aware that the information has been published on FDA's website;
- what constitutes prominent display or sharing of the information by a grocery store with its customers;
- the impact on grocery stores from posting the information;
- if consumers should be notified that this type of information will not be generated for dietary supplements, infant formula, and fruits and vegetables that are raw agricultural commodities; and
- if FDA should require industry to submit consumer-oriented information to FDA, even if the food will not be available for sale to consumers at the retail level.

Comments can be filed online at FSMA-RFR-Amendment or in writing to: Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305), Food and Drug Administration, 5630 Fishers Lane, Rm. 1061, Rockville, MD 20852 through Monday, June 9. Copies of the proposed rules are also available at this address

The FDA implemented the RFR in 2009 in an effort to provide a reliable mechanism to track patterns of foodborne illness and protect public health. The RFR requires responsible parties, or those that manufacture, process, pack or hold foods for human or animal consumption, to report within 24 hours if there is a reasonable possibility that exposure to a food item could lead to illness or death in humans or animals.

"While this has been a requirement for the past five years, many in the industry that are considered responsible parties still aren't aware they have to file," Wenger says. "The comment period gives industry the chance to not only have a voice in the implementation, but also to learn about the process they should already be following."

For those that need a refresher or are unaware of the RFR at all, a wide variety of information is available at www.fda.gov/reportablefoodregistry.

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